at Jaisalmer has been completed, an interim set up (1KW) has also been made technically ready at Barmer pending completion of permanent 10KW HPT set-up.

(b) Total expenditure incurred, till June'97, on HPT projects at Jaisalmer and Barmer is Rs. 493.28 lakhs and Rs. 758.14 lakhs respectively.

(c) and (d) Though both the 10KW HPT at Jaisalmer and 1KW HPT (interim set-up) at Barmer had been commissioned nationally on 31.03.1997, the two HPTs could not be made fully functional due to non availability of staff sanction for HPT, Jaisalmer and only truncated staff sanction for HPT, Barmer. Though no specific time frame can be indicated for making these HPTs fully functional, the same would depend upon sanction of full complement of staff for operation and maintenance of these projects by the competent authority.

**Implementation of Projects in Vidharbha**

1417. SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether progress of ongoing projects in Vidharbha Region has recently been reviewed;

(b) if so, the details thereof in terms of standard norms and reasons for slow progress;

(c) the details of the projects which have missed implementation targets during the last 3 years in Vidharbha Region; and

(d) the action plan for 1997-98 for completion of incomplete projects on priority basis with due weightage to backward/tribal areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The progress of various projects being implemented in Vidhabha area was lastly reviewed in February, 97 and it will be reviewed again soon for this financial year.

(b) The schemes which are carried forward from last year are mostly transmission schemes viz. Radio schemes. The normal time frame for execution of scheme is about two and a half years which includes one year time for acquiring land through State Government The main reasons for non-implementation of projects in time are :-

(i) Non availability of land and building due to delayed or non-allotment of land by the State Government

(ii) Delay in supply of equipments.

(c) and (d) Details are given in the enclosed statement.

***Statement***

(c) and (d) The details of the projects which have missed implementation target during the last 3 years in Vidharbha Region and the action plan for 1997-98 for their completion are as under :

**A. Transmission Projects :**

13 Nos. of UHF/MW Schemes to provide STD facility to Taluka Headquarters. were delayed mainly because of delay in allotment of land for these schemes by the State Government As a result two of these schemes had to be revise to have different routing and two schemes are being revised to Optical Fibre Cable system. All these schemes have been included in the commissioning programme for 1997-98.

Action is being taken to acquire land from private parties wherever the State Government has expressed its inability to provide the land.

3 Nos. of Microwave schemes and 1 MCPC Satellite scheme got delayed because of delay in supply of equipment. Equipment allotment for 3 of these schemes has already been done and these are expected to be commissioned during this year.

**B. Switching Projects :**

3 Nos. of switching projects viz. local cum TAX E-10B exchange at Chandrapur, 500 lines expansion at Amravati and 500 lines E-10B expansion at Akola got delayed. Two of these projects at Chandrapur and Akola have since been commisioned during 1997-98. The third project is also expected to be commissioned during this year.

**Postal Licences to Unemployed Graduates**

1418. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Department of Posts is going to provide licence to unemployed Graduates to operate Mini Post Offices in Gujarat;

(b) if so, whether there is a great potential to use the employed youth in Gujarat; and

(c) if so, the manner in which the Government is going to use the potentiality of the educated unemployed youth in the State?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (c) The Department of Post has one licensing scheme called Licensed Stamp Vendor Scheme, under which stamps and stationery are sold through its licensees. This licence is given on an application to any one who fulfils the criteria laid down and follows the prescribed conditions as per statement-I enclosed.

In the villages where it is not possible to open a Post Office "Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Yojana" a scheme

to provide basic postal facilities through Panchayats was evolved. The details of the scheme are given in the enclosed statement-II. Under Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Yojana, an unemployed educated youth from within the panchayat areas whose minimum educational qualification should be matriculation, on being selected by Gram Panchayat with the written consent of the Supdt./Sr. Supdt. will perform the postal functions within the areas of the panchayat.

***Statement-I***

**Licensed Stamp Vendor :**

The scheme of Licensed Stamp vendors was introduced in 1966 as a measure to provide easy availability of postal stamps and stationery and to decongest counters.

**Conditions :**

1. Licences cannot be granted to officials working in post offices or persons otherwise connected to post offices.
2. Preference is given to ex-servicemen, the unemployed and physically handicapped.
3. Lincensee can be an individual, a firm or a corporate body.
4. The premises of the lincensee should not be less than half a kilometer from the nearest post office and should have a signboard indieating availability of stamps and stationery and should be open for a minimum of five hours in a day.
5. A security deposit of Rs. 1000/- and lincece fee of rs. 100/- p.a. is prescribed.
6. A stationery component of 25% of total purchase made by the vendor from the post office is compulsory.
7. A licence is valid for one year.

***Statement-II***

*Panchayat Sanchar Seva Yojana*

**Objective of the Scheme :**

The objective of the Scheme is to provide basic postal and telecommunications facilities to the Gram Panchayat villages which are still without post offices. In this scheme, the Panchayat will be the nodal point for retailing some of the basic services like sale of stamps and postal stationery, collection and delivery of letters, booking of registered articles, etc.

**Functions :**

The functions given below shall be performed by the Panchayat Kendra Unless otherwise specified by the Department :-

(a) Booking of registered letters except VP and Insured articles;

(b) Sale of postage stamps and postal stationery;

(c) Grant of certificate of posting;

(d) Operation of Mahila Samridhi Yojana Scheme, where feasible;

(e) Collection and delivery of mail including clearance of letter boxes, where feasible;

(f) Propogation of Small Savings Scheme and Rural Postal Life Insurance; and

(g) Other functions of Branch Post Office as and when the Department is satisfied that Kendras are able to discharge them.

In addition the following optional functions may be given to the Sanchar Kendra In-charge by Supdtt./Sr. Supdtt. Post Offices of concerned division.

Conveyance of mail from Account Office or nearest Post Office to Sanchar Kendra advice-versa.

The Sanchar Kendra Agent under the scheme shall also be enbrusted with operation of STD/PCO/Panchayat Phone, subject to fulfilment of eligibility criteria and terms and conditions laid down by Department of Telecommunications, in villages where such facility does not exist at present. The existing PCO holders in villages can also be utilised as Sanchar Kendra Agents.

**Salient Features :**

Participation of the Gram Panchayats in the Scheme will be voluntary.

An unemployed educated youth from with the Panchayat areas whose minimum educational qualification should be matriculation on being selected by Gram Panchayat with the written consent of the Supdtt./Sr. Supdtt. will perform the postal functions within the areas of the Panchayat.

The person so identified will act as agent of the Panchayat for operating the scheme. However, for the purpose of operation of this scheme, the panchayat will enter into an agreement with the Department of Post.

Gram Panchayat will earmark a suitable place, preferably a building owned by it, for locating the Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra. The location of the Kendra will not change with the change of incumbent.

Postal facilities would be made available to the people on all days of the week, except Sundays and Postal holidays. The business hours will be fixed by the Superintendent of Post Offices according to the convenience and needs of the local people and shall be duly notified. However, for operating STD/PCO/Gram Panchayat Phones, working days and hours as specified by the Telecommunication authorities shall be maintained.

Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras will be established in Gram Panchayat Headquarters villages.

The Gram Panchayat will be accountable to the Department of Post for ensuring proper and efficient postal services through Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra.

The Sanchar Sewa Kendra will also be subject to regular supervision and inspection by the Department of Post.

**Remuneration/Commission :**

A fixed allowance of Rs. 300/- per month for providing counter services and for collection, conveyance and delivery of mail wherever permitted will be paid.

The agent of the Panchayat will be compensated for other postal services provided in the Panchyat areas by payment of :-

(a) A commission of 5% of the value of stamps/ stationery will be allowed at the time of purchase in normal rural areas. In hilly and tribal areas, commission at the following rates will be all allowed :-

(i) On sale up to Rs. 100 : 5%

(ii) On sale from Rs. 101 to 200 : 7.5%

(iii) On sale from Rs. 201 and above : 10%

(b) A commission of 50 paise for booking and delivery of a registered article.

(c) Commission at the prescribed rates for handling Mahila Samriddhi Yojana Accounts.

(d) Commission at prescribed rates for propogating Postal Life Insurance and National Savings Scheme.

(e) Commission at the rates to be prescribed for providing other services.

For operating STD/PCO/Gram Panchayat Phone, Commission as prescribed by the Department of Telecommunications shall be paid.

A system of rewarding the best Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra in a Postal Circle will be introduced in order to encourage and motivate the Panchayat to ensure efficient postal services in the area.

*[Translation]*

**Elections to Panchayats and Zila Parishads**

1419. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the reasons for not holding the elections of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad of Chandigarh so far whereas it is compulsory to hold the elections of such institutions within six months from the date of their constitution;

(b) whether the Government are aware that no stay order of any court is in force in this regard at present; and

(c) if so, the time by which the elections are likely to be held there?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) to (c) The elections to the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad in the U.T. of Chandigarh were held in January, 1996, but the results could not be declared as the Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the declaration of results on Writ Petition. The stay order new stands vacated following dismissal of the writ petition. The U.T. Administration of Chandigarh is taking further action on the formation of these bodies.

**Telecommunication Facility in Rural Areas**

1420. SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR SINGH :
SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE :
KUMARI UMA BHARATI :
SHRIMATI KETAKI DEVI SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of poor functioning of telephone system in rural areas;

(b) if so, whether the Government have formulated any scheme for improvement in telephone service in rural areas;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the number of rural areas likely to be benefited by the said scheme;

(e) whether the progress made in rural telecommunications system is far away from the targets;

(f) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(g) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The telephone systems in rural areas are working satisfactorily except in some difficult, inaccessible and remote areas.

(b) Yes Sir.

(c) For further improving the telephone services in rural areas following steps are being taken.

(i) Provision of telephone facility to all the villages by the year 2000.